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P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909 Phone: (517) 335-0471

The Assist

Helping to Improve Access to and Progress in the General Curriculum

December 2001 Volume 1, No. 3

Educators Provide Feedback on MI-Access Conferences

Dear Readers,

During November 2001, four conferences were held around the state to train District MI-Access Coordinators so they, in turn, could train School MI-Access Coordinators and teachers. The conferences were designed to provide District MI-Access Coordinators with additional MI-Access training materials developed by the state and share ideas about how they might use them when helping others learn how to conduct the observations in MI-Access.

There was an excellent turnout. More than 500 people participated in the conferences, the majority of whom were District MI-Access Coordinators (the primary target audience). There also were numerous School MI-Access Coordinators and even some teachers in attendance. This broad mix of people made for rich and insightful conversations about how to administer MI-Access and the value it can bring over time to improving student performance.

After the conferences, we received excellent feedback from attendees. This information will help us as we plan for next year's events. Already we are exploring new topics, such as how to use results from the assessments. We also want to involve more educators as presenters so they can share their first-hand experiences and expertise. If you are interested in playing a more active role in the conferences next year, please e-mail us at mi-access@tasa.com.

Thanks to all of you who attended the conferences and remember, if you have any questions, please e-mail me at dutcherp@mi.gov or Frank McClelland, MI-Access Special Education Consultant, at mcclellandf@mi.gov.

Peggy Dutcher MI-Access Project Director E-mail: <u>dutcherp@mi.gov</u>

MI-Access Live Teleconference: Coming Soon to a Local or Intermediate District Near You

If you have not done so already, please reserve January 23, 2002, from 2:30 - 3:30 p.m., on your calendar. That is the date and time of this year's annual MI-Access Live Teleconference. The purpose of the teleconference is to provide detailed information on the logistics that need to take place BEFORE, DURING, and AFTER MI-Access is administered, and assist District MI-Access Coordinators with understanding how their responsibilities relate to those of School MI-Access Coordinators and teachers.

The teleconference also provides a unique opportunity for people to send in questions about administering MI-Access and receive live responses. If there is not enough time to answer all the questions on the air, rest assured answers will be forth-There will be a written Teleconference Q & A, which will be posted on the Michigan Department of Office Education. of Special Education/Early Intervention Services Web site (www.mde.state.mi.us/off/sped). In addition, it will be e-mailed to all District MI-Access Coordinators via the MI-Access District Coordinator Listsery.

It is strongly recommended that the teleconference be taped. That way, it can be played back later for individuals who are unable to view the live broadcast and then used as a reference tool.

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State Board of Education P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, Michigan 48909

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Funded by the Michigan Department of Education and the U.S. Office of Special Education.

NOTES FROM THE CONTRACTOR

E-MAIL ADDRESSES: If you are a District MI-Access Coordinator, we need yours.

Communication is critical in our efforts to provide District MI-Access Coordinators with fast and efficient service. At present, e-mail is proving to be our most effective and reliable communication tool. Therefore, we likely will use e-mail more as the MI-Access program evolves.

Through that avenue, District MI-Access Coordinators may receive notices of training dates, locations, and times; teleconference access information; updates on procedures; corrections/changes, and other important information. In fact, if we have your current e-mail address, you should have already received at least one message from us. (If not, it means we do not have your correct address.) If you are the designated District MI-Access Coordinator and have not yet submitted your current e-mail address to us, please send it as soon as possible to miaccess@tasa.com.

NOTE: You must be the designated District MI-Access Coordinator to be included in the Listserv, since you are the person responsible for disseminating information to others in your District as appropriate.

DISTRICT DATA: Coordinator designations and student and teacher counts are still needed.

Thank you to those who have provided us

with information about your school districts. There are, however, some districts that have not yet submitted the names and addresses of their MI-Access Coordinators. Others have not yet provided us with the projected number of students and teachers who will be involved with MI-Access. This information is critical for us to distribute assessment materials in a timely fashion to the right people in the right quantities. To meet the timelines set forth in the assessment schedule, we need to have this information immediately. If you have not designated your MI-Access Coordinators or provided student and teacher count information, please do so as soon as possible by calling the MI-Access hotline at 1-888-382-4246. Use the same number to order additional designation or student and teacher count forms if you need them. If your district does not designate a District MI-Access Coordinator, materials will be sent to the current District MEAP Coordinator.

REMINDER: Videotape Feedback Forms must be returned by January 11, 2002.

The Training Videotape Feedback Forms (green) were inadvertently left out of the training packets, but were mailed in mid-November under separate cover to all District MI-Access Coordinators. Please complete and return the forms by January 11 if you have feedback.

Your responses are appreciated and will help improve the design and implementation of future MI-Access training materials.

Check it out!

The assessment component of the Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services' Web site

www.mde.state.mi.us/off/sped

MI-Access Live Teleconference

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Here is the necessary information for accessing the teleconference:

MDOE Uplink January 23, 2002 Test: 1415 to 1430 EST Program: 1430 to 1530 EST

KU Band Satellite: Galaxy 11 (Located at 91 Degrees West) Transponder K16 Downlink Frequency: 12018 MegaHertz (Vertical)

Audio Subcarriers: 6.2 and 6.8

MegaHertz

C Band Satellite: GE2 (Located at 85 Degrees West)

Transponder C11

Downlink Frequency: 3920 MegaHertz (Vertical)

Audio Subcarriers: 6.2 and 6.8

MegaHertz

Michigan's Assessments Include All Students

Throughout the year, you may have heard that changes are being made to Michigan's Educational Assessment System (MEAS). Many of the changes are in direct response to federal requirements. For example, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Amendments of 1994, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), both, in their own way, require that state assessment systems become more inclusive. The Michigan State Board of Education's goals are consistent with those federal requirements because they also strive to increase achievement for all Michigan students.

To make its statewide assessment system more inclusive, Michigan has taken several steps. First, the State Board of Education adopted the following policy:

It shall be the policy of the State Board of Education that each local and intermediate school district, and public school academy, will ensure the participation of all students in the Michigan Educational Assessment System.

Second, the state has been working for several years to develop two new assessment programs. In addition to the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP), with which most people are already familiar, Michigan now has MI-Access, Michigan's Alternate Assessment Program designed for students with varying levels of cognitive impairment, and ELL (English Language Learner)-Access designed for students for whom English is not their primary language.

Following is a brief description of all three-assessment programs in Michigan.

Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP)

The Michigan Educational Assessment Program is a statewide standardized testing program aligned to the curriculum standards approved by the Michigan State Board of Education. MEAP tests are given in grades 4, 5, 7, 8 and 11. Fourth graders currently take mathematics and reading, fifth graders take science, social studies and writing. Seventh graders currently take reading and writing, and beginning with the 2001/2002 school year, the 8th graders will take mathematics, science and social studies. High school students take all five subjects.

Various committees of Michigan educators provide services for MEAP. The test questions are designed from test blueprints drafted by Michigan educators. Content and bias committees of educators check all MEAP questions to ensure that they match the curriculum and that they are fair to all students. Educators participate in rangefinding, the process in which the scoring criteria are set for the open-ended items. All open-ended items are scored in Michigan by Michigan educators. Finally, educators serve as judges on the panels that recommend cut scores for the tests.

MI-Access

MI-Access, Michigan's Alternate Assessment Program is designed to assess students with disabilities for whom the Individualized Educational Program (IEP) Team determines that the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) assessments, even with assessment accommodations, are inappropriate.

The Phase 1 MI-Access assessments are intended for 9, 10, 13, 14, 17 and 18 year-old students. These age groups basically parallel the MEAP grade levels assessed. The assessments include a standardized set of performance based assessment activities. Teachers will have a six-week period during which to administer the assessment.

The Phase 1 MI-Access assessments include two components - Participation and Supported Independence. These components are for students with severe or moderate cognitive impairment, as well as those who function as if they have such impairment. The Phase 2 MI-Access assessments addressing Functional Independence are currently in the beginning stages of development. They are being designed for 4, 5, 7, 8 and 11th grade students with mild cognitive impairment, as well as those who function as if they have such impairment.

Various committees of Michigan educators, including classroom teachers, provide input to MI-Access. These include an Alternate Assessment Advisory Committee, Content Advisory Committees, and a Sensitivity Review Committee. These committees ensure that MI-Access reflects the framework upon which the assessment is based to ensure content validity and that the activities are not biased toward students with disabilities.

In addition, there is a Technical Advisory Committee that provides the MDE with technical and research advice related to the development and implementation of MI-Access.

ELL-Access

ELL-Access is a component of the Educational Assessment Michigan System and is designed to include limited English proficient students in the state assessment system. ESEA, Title I requires that all students be included in a state's assessment system "to the extent practicable in the language and form most likely to yield accurate and reliable information on what such students know and can do, to determine such students' mastery of skills in subjects other than English." ELL-Access is being developed in cooperation with Michigan educators of ELL students. The system will provide guidance to school districts and public school academies on the most appropriate way to include each student in the MEAS. The ELL-Access will establish a defined process for school districts and public school academies to ensure that ELLs participate in a meaningful

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Michigan's Assistive Technology Resource (MATR): Assisting Districts in the Consideration of AT for Students

Michigan's Assistive Technology Resource (MATR) operates through an Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) State Discretionary Grant awarded by the Michigan State Board of Education, through which MATR works with intermediate and local district teams to build district capacity addressing the assistive technology (AT) needs for all students.

Assistive technology can provide powerful tools to help students engage more effectively in the general curriculum. As districts develop greater capacity to make effective decisions about the AT needs of their students, we expect to see increases in student success within the curriculum. Assistive alternatives for students can help to increase student success, both in mastering curriculum content and in demonstrating their knowledge and skills.

Five different kinds of services are provided by MATR. These services comprise an interrelated set of supports and resources to enhance local capacity for providing assistive technology services to students.

• Information and Referral:

MATR staff researches information about state-of-the-art technology, daily living devices, equipment, and the identification of assistive technology solutions for children with disabilities, providing current product and service information, and available resources on a given request. MATR maintains a collection of catalogs, reprints, and publications to assist assistive technology personnel in the schools.

• Consultation Services and Team Enhancement:

MATR provides assistance in the assessment of student needs for assistive technology, and consults with local assistive technology teams regarding assistive technology options suggested by such assessments. Emphasis is placed on building local district capacity to address students' assistive technology needs at the local level. This means that every effort is made to ensure that local district personnel,

consumers, and families are involved in team functions, and appropriate resource and consultative support is provided at the local level whenever possible.

Materials Resources:

MATR houses and maintains an extensive library of existing large print and braille textbooks available to all school districts in Michigan. If MATR does not have the textbook you desire, MATR will search for the title in national databases for textbooks in Braille, large print, or cassette tape at no charge. Should the title be unavailable, MATR will produce the textbook in large print or braille for a nominal fee.

Software and equipment lending libraries are part of MATR's Materials Resources as well. Items are available for loan to district personnel for trial use to support district assessment and consideration of assistive technology for student's needs.

• Training and Personnel Development:

Training provided by MATR is designed to facilitate leadership and local participation using a team process for developing and implementing assistive technology plans for students in Michigan. Training and demonstrations are provided in collaboration with local district personnel on a variety of topics, and support for attaining nationally recognized competencies in assistive technology is offered. In addition, MATR staff conduct sessions at a number of statewide professional conferences each year, and hosts in-services, workshops, seminars, and training opportunities for education and other professionals at the MATR facility in St. Johns.

MATR offers a number of opportunities for interested persons in pre-service, inservice, and graduate programs. One such opportunity is MATR's Team Leadership Practicum which is designed to increase and hone leadership skills

for local district assistive technology and IEP Teams, and to provide a cadre of trained and experienced assistive technology contacts who will be available to assist with training, consultations, and development of the assistive technology capacities within their own districts.

• Communications:

MATR maintains a Web site that can be accessed for locating information, resources, or technical assistance online. An online discussion group is moderated by MATR staff, and provides an excellent forum for locating information, ideas, and networking with others involved with AT.

For more information or inquiries, contact MATR at:

Michigan's Assistive
Technology Resource
1023 South U.S. 27
St. Johns, MI 48817
Phone: (800) 274-7426
Fax: (989) 224-0330

e-mail: matr@match.org
Web site: www.matr.org



If you have ideas, suggestions, or tips you would like to see included in The Assist, send them to mi-access@tasa.com.

TIPS

Transition Assessment for Youth With Disabilities

By Jamie L. Van Dycke and James E. Martin, University of Oklahoma – Zarrow Center

Transition services for youth with disabilities has been a major focus in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990 and the IDEA Amendments of 1997 (Lombard, Miller, & Hazelkorn, 1998). In fact, according to the first paragraph of IDEA 1997, "one of the primary purposes of the IDEA is to...ensure that all children with disabilities have...a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for employment and independent living" [Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Sec. 300.1(a)]. The provision of transition services for students with disabilities is now mandated to begin at the age of 14 (or younger if appropriate).

Transition services means a coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability that —

- (1) Is designed within an outcomeoriented process, that promotes movement from school to postschool activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation;
- (2) Is based on the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests; and
- (3) Includes -
 - (i) Instruction
 - (ii) Related services
 - (iii) Community experiences
 - (iv) The development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives; and
 - (v) If appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

Assessment facilitates the delivery of transition services, and has become a process

with a distinct definition. The Division of Career Development and Transition (DCDT) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), believes that:

Transition assessment is the ongoing process of collecting data on the individual's strengths, needs, preferences, and interests as they relate to the demands of current and future working, educational, living, and personal and social environments. Assessment data serve as the common thread in the transition process and form the basis for defining goals and services to be included in the Individualized Education Program (Sitlington, Neubert, Begun, Lombard, & Leconte, 1996).

Transition assessment must provide information to facilitate the successful delivery of transition service's three components. First, assessment of students' preferences, interests, and desired post-school outcomes provides overall IEP direction (Sitlington, 1996; Martin, Marshall & Maxon, 1993). Second, assessment information gives the student and IEP team information for developing a course of study. Third, assessment information guides post-school transition linkages. The transition assessment process must deliver sufficient information so that these three service components link together to enable students to make a successful transition from high school to their post-school life.

IDEA prefers that educators use informal assessment methods, as they more authentically represent the information needed to develop the three parts of transition service delivery. Informal assessment methods go beyond paper and pencil tests (e.g., interviews, work samples, portfolios, etc.), and ultimately allow students to become more involved in deciding what assessment tools to use, and in interpreting the results.

For more information or inquiries, contact:

Jamie L. Van Dycke or James E. Martin University of Oklahoma — Zarrow Center for Learning Enrichment Carpenter Hall, Room 111 840 Asp Avenue Norman, OK 73019-4090 PHONE: (405) 325-8951 FAX: (405) 325-7841

Or visit the Web site of the Michigan Department of Education, OSE/EIS Transition Services Project: www.mitsp.org

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Sitlington, P. (1996). Transition assessment
– where have we been and where
should we be going? Career
Development for Exceptional
Individuals, 19(2), 159-168.

Sitlington, P., Neubert, D.A., Begun, W., Lombard, R. C., Leconte, P.J. (1996). Assess for success: Handbook on transition assessment. Reston, VA: The Council for Exceptional Children.

MI-CLiMB: A New Resource for ALL Educators

In Michigan, current federal special education directives continue to require us to provide students with disabilities "access to" and "progress in" the general curriculum. Many of us in Special Education, however, are not as familiar as we could be with the Michigan Curriculum Framework and its components.

Fortunately, educators from across the state, in partnership with the Michigan Department of Education, have developed MI-CLiMB (Clarifying Language in Michigan's Benchmarks). The MI-CLiMB Project is designed to help educators better understand and gain experience with the Michigan Curriculum Framework in four key areas: Language Arts, Social Studies, Math, and Science. It explains each of the aforementioned "benchmarks" in detail and can be used by educators to plan, align, and/or improve classroom curriculum instruction and assessment.

According to the August 2001 issue of

the *MEAP UPDATE*, MI-CLIMB is in the process of developing an interactive CD-ROM with various tools, including an explanation of each benchmark, example instruction and assessment strategies, concept definitions, resources, web links, and MEAP connections. Since the MI-CLIMB CD-ROMs will not be disseminated until January 2002, however, the project has also developed temporary Web sites for each of the benchmark areas. Below is a listing of those sites in case you want to obtain more information on the project.

Language Arts:

www.remc7.k12.mi.us/oaisd/miclimb

Social Studies: www.oakland.k12.mi.us

Science: www.miclimbscience.org

Math: www.miclimbmath.org

For those of us who are technologically challenged, the MDE will also be partnering with the Michigan Technology Integration Project (MTIP) to provide statewide training on how to use the CD-ROM so we can all benefit from its content. (Go to www.MTIP.org for more information about MTIP.)

With the advent of the new, integrated language arts assessment in 2003, all MEAP assessments are based upon the Model Michigan Content Standards and Benchmarks "rather than those old, dusty Essential Goals and Objectives." The MI-CLIMB Project should help all of us to get up to speed on what the Michigan content standards and benchmarks are and how they can be incorporated into our programs, instruction and assessment efforts.

For more information about MI-CLiMB, contact Cynthia Clingman, Ottawa Area ISD, 887-702-8600 or Lynette Van Dyke, 887-241-3508.

Michigan's Assessments Include All Students

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assessment process. The ELL-Access is in the process of being developed and will incorporate the requirements of ESEA, Title I, as well as the requirements that are included in the expected reauthorization of ESEA.

The ELL-Access guidance document will provide direction to school districts and PSAs in the following areas:

- the identification of each student's level of English language proficiency
- procedures to determine whether assessment with MEAP will produce meaningful data
- procedures to determine whether accommodations permitted for ELL students are needed
- procedures to determine whether assessment with MEAP is unlikely to

- produce meaningful results due to the student's limited English language skills
- information for the selection and administration of alternate assessments for students who do not participate in MEAP, and
- guidance in recording and reporting the progress of ELLs who participate in alternate assessments.

Reporting MI-Access

In order to report MI-Access results, one important step must take place. That step is standard setting. Standard setting is the process used to determine the criteria for calculating how a student has done on each of the Performance Expectations assessed in the MI-Access assessments.

Standard setting meetings will take place in April 2002. There will be two standard setting panels--one for MI-Access Participation and one for MI-Access Supported Independence. Each panel will be comprised of 3 "sub panels" — one each for ages 9/10, 13/14 and 17/18. The panels' members will include stakeholders, such as classroom teachers (special and general education), building level administrators, parents, special education directors, and school psychologists. Forms for nominating panel members will be mailed to District MI-Access and MEAP Coordinators in January 2002 and will be posted on the MDE/OSE/EIS Web site (www.mde.state.mi.us/off/sped).

QAR: Planning and Accountability in Michigan

The reauthorization of IDEA 1997 includes specific changes that will continue to impact many of our educational strategies and practices. As a result, special educators will acquire new roles that change how we approach our duties. We will have to be more closely aligned with general education in curriculum and state assessment systems, and we will no longer be able to think of special education and general education as separate entities within the public education system. Many of these changes are already well beyond the planning stages and are becoming common practice across the country and in our state.

These IDEA-driven changes include closing the gap between how special education and general education provide services and student opportunities. They also call for more collaboration between all educational service providers. Students with disabilities should benefit from these changes by having better access to the general curriculum and greater inclusion in the opportunities and experiences of general education settings.

In addition, IDEA 1997 has been moving accountability expectations in special education services away from monitoring and compliance and toward data-based decision making. Here in Michigan, the OSE/EIS has developed goals for aligning services with IDEA 1997 and the priorities set forth by the Action Plan of the Michigan State Board of Education (MSBE). important part of this process is the Quality Assurance Review program (QAR). At sites throughout the state, the QAR approach identifies student needs through data collection and analysis. Next, the data is used to plan goals and develop implementation strategies. Then, the results of the review are included in school improvement efforts and reports to the public.

The Quality Assurance Review process involves:

 Gathering multi-source data to determine the strengths and areas to improve the performance of students with disabilities.

- Developing Quality Assurance Review Self-Assessment Indicators for use in the classroom, school, and district.
- Analyzing the performance assessment results of all data sources to determine what similarities and differences exist.
- Identifying what additional data are needed from students with disabilities and all populations to clarify and/or support the analysis.
- Planning/prioritizing need(s) to improve instruction based on trends, similarities and differences of the data analysis.
- Developing goals to improve the performance of students with disabilities.
- Implementing the goals in an action plan to improve the performance of students with disabilities.
- Including QAR Review in existing school improvement and education reporting processes to improve reporting to the public.

As these components indicate, QAR is a comprehensive, data-based approach to focus, align, and improve special education services. It is designed to offer a detailed, effective approach to improving special education services in many different but highly important ways. With the increased emphasis on assessment-based accountability and instruction, QAR may prove to be a most valuable and creative tool in advancing special education improvement efforts.

For more information about this program contact the Office of Special Education/Early Intervention Services at 517-373-0923 or visit our Web site: www.mde.state.mi.us/off/sped.

GLOSSARY



AGE APPROPRIATE: A term, when used in the context of MI-Access, which refers to the materials, situations, and environmental surroundings used to assess each student at his/her chronological age level. These materials, situations, and surroundings should be those which would most likely be used with or by peers of the same chronological age. They should be selected to allow each student to function as independently as possible and also be used during instruction.

"...or those who function as if they have such an impairment." A phrase used to describe students who adaptively function in educational environments that differ from their diagnostic categories. These students, as a result, should be given the MI-Access assessment that best matches their adaptive functioning level of independence.

SAFE AND APPROPRIATE: A term, when used in the context of MI-Access, which refers to student behavior during assessment activities. The intent is that a student's behavior is age appropriate, socially acceptable, and does not cause harm to him/herself or others.

SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE: A term, when used in the context of MI-Access, which refers to student behavior exhibited throughout assessment activities. This behavior, ideally, should be of the kind one would typically observe in non-disabled students of the same chronological age, and which is generally accepted as the norm by mainstream society. When applied to students with disabilities, consideration is to be given to the nature of a student's disability and cognitive level, however, it is expected that the student's behavior should not draw undue attention to him or herself in the school or community.

The Assist

Important MI-Access Dates

MI-Access Assessment Materials Arrive in Districts
Week of January 14, 2002

MI-Access Coordinator Teleconference January 23, 2002

MI-Access Assessment Window February 18 – March 29, 2002



Bookmark these Web Sites:

www.remc7.k12.mi.us/oaisd/miclimb
www.oakland.k12.mi.us
www.miclimbscience.org
www.miclimbmath.org
www.mtip.org
www.matr.org
www.mitsp.org

This newsletter related to the assessment of students with disabilities is distributed to local and intermediate superintendents, directors of special education, MI-Access Coordinators, MEAP Coordinators, school principals, Parent Advisory Committees, and institutes of higher education. The Assist may also be downloaded from the Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services Web site. www.mde.state.mi.us/off/sped.

Michigan Department of Education MI-Access, Michigan's Alternate Assessment Program P.O. Box 30008 Lansing, MI 48909

